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An Experiment in Dream Telepathy with "The Grateful Dead"*

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*ESP and the dream phase of
sleep are explored with "The
Grateful Dead."*

A wealth of anecdotal and clinical material exists which lends support to the possibility of extrasensory effects occurring in the dream phase of the sleep-wakefulness cycle (e.g., D'Alessandro, 1968; Mackenzie, 1965). However, an experimental approach to the question of the paranormal dream did not become possible until the advent of psychophysiological monitoring techniques. It was discovered that subjects awakened from periods of rapid eye movement (REM) sleep were frequently able to recall vivid visual dream episodes (Aserinsky & Kleitman, 1953). Thus, for the first time, a telepathic sender (or "agent") could program a target stimulus in any desired relationship to the recurrent episodes of REM activity during the course of a nighttime experiment.

Beginning in 1964, a series of experimental studies was inaugurated at the Maimonides Medical Center in Brooklyn, N.Y., to test the hypothesis that sleeping subjects are able to incorporate aspects of randomly selected target stimuli into their dreams. Not only have the majority of the formal experimental series yielded

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statistically significant results (Ullman & Krippner, 1970), but an analysis of 83 pilot sessions completed between 1964 and 1969 produced data confirming the telepathy hypothesis at the .00001 level (Ullman, Krippner, & Honorton, 1970).

Art prints have been used as stimuli for these experiments because of their ability to maintain the attention of individuals and to move them emotionally, esthetically, and intellectually. The art prints selected contain archetypal themes, imply strong emotional feelings, and utilize vivid color—the elements often found to characterize those paranormal dreams which are reported anecdotally and clinically.

Pilot Session

To investigate the possible effect that a large number of agents would have in a telepathy study, a pilot session was arranged for March 15, 1970. The entire audience at a concert served as agents. The music at the concert was provided by The Holy Modal Rounders, a rock-and-roll group. Target preparation was handled by Jean Mayo who coordinated the slide program with The Lidd Light Company, a group of lumina artists in charge of the light show which accompanied the music. Miss Mayo gave the audience brief verbal directions before the target was revealed. The target material was designated as "Birds" and was later described by Miss Mayo in the following way (Mayo, 1970):

Visual sequences were prepared for one movie projector and six slide projectors. A color film about eagles and their nesting habits was shown on the movie projector. The slide programs for the slide projectors featured American birds, African birds, various photographs of seagulls, words about birds (e.g., "Think Birds," "Fly High"), bird symbols (e.g., the Egyptian hieroglyph for "bird"), and a polarized slide of a phoenix which appeared and disappeared in flames as the polarizer was moved. The Holy Modal Rounders played the song, "If You Want to be a Bird," while the film and slides were shown to the audience.

There were five volunteer subjects for this study, all located in a 100-mile radius from the concert location in Manhattan. All subjects were told the location of the concert and were directed to record their images at 12:00 midnight, at which time the target material was exposed.

One subject, Helen A., had the impression of "something mythological, like a Griffin or a Phoenix, or something." A second subject, Michael B., reported the image of "a snake." Doug C., the third subject, reported a recurring image of "grapes." Stanley K., subject number four, visualized "an embryo in flames, growing into a tree."

Richie Havens, the celebrated American singer and recording artist, was the fifth subject. Upon closing his eyes at the appointed time, Mr. Havens reported visualizing "a number of seagulls flying over water." Both Mr. Havens' image and that of Helen A. represented direct correspondences with the target material, with the report of Stanley K. representing a partial correspondence.

In reviewing the methodology used in this pilot session, it was decided to make the directions to the audience more explicit and to tell them the location of at least one subject—something not done in the pilot session—during the next attempt to use multiple telepathy agents. It was also decided to randomly select the target material just before it was revealed to the audience so as to eliminate the possibility of sensory leakage through conscious or unconscious collusion and fraud.

Method

For the six-night study, an attempt was made to use a large number of telepathic agents in a situation which would involve some of the emotional intensity which characterizes spontaneous instances of telepathic transmission. The entire audience attending concerts by The Grateful Dead, a rock-and-roll musical group, was instructed to telepathically transmit an art print which was randomly selected just before it was projected on a screen above the musical group while they were performing.

One of the laboratory staff members (R.S.) selected 14 2" by 2" slides of art prints which he felt satisfied the requirements previously stated. He randomly selected two of these slides and gave them to an experimenter (R.M.) the night of each concert. The slides were sealed in separate opaque envelopes. The staff member marked one envelope "heads" and the other "tails." At 11:30 P.M. each night, the experimenter tossed a coin and noted whether

it read "heads" or "tails." This determined which envelope he opened and which slide he projected for the audience.

Such art prints were utilized as "A Synthetic Emblematic Cross" and "The Seven Spinal Chakras," both by the Armenian artist Scralian, and "The Castle of The Pyrenees" and "Philosophy in the Boudoir," both by the French artist Magritte. Duplicate copies of the slides were put aside for later evaluation by outside judges.

Setting

The six concerts involved in this experiment were held at the Capitol Theater in Port Chester, N.Y., approximately 45 miles from the Dream Laboratory. Music from a Grateful Dead album had figured prominently in a previous ESP experiment at the laboratory (Krippner, 1971).

The Grateful Dead began performing in 1964 and are one of the originators of "acid-rock" or "the San Francisco Sound." The group played for Ken Kesey's "Acid Tests" in La Honda, California, and participated in the early Trips festivals, the Monterey Pop Festival, and the First Family Dog Dances in San Francisco (Krippner, 1970). Jerry Garcia, a member of the group, describes how the name originated:

Back in the late days of the Acid Tests, we were looking for a name. We'd abandoned The Warlocks, it didn't fit anymore. One day we were all over at Phil's house smoking DMF. He had a big Oxford dictionary, opened it, and there was "grateful dead," those words juxtaposed. It was one of those moments, y'know, like everything else on the page went blank, diffuse, just sorta oozed away, and there was GRATEFUL DEAD, big black letters edged all around in gold, man, blasting out at me, such a stunning combination. So I said, "How about Grateful Dead?" and that was it. (Lydon, 1969.)

Early in their careers, each member of the group tried LSD. In 1966, the group lived in Los Angeles for three months with Augustus Owsley Stanley III, the legendary supplier of the black market's highest quality LSD. They returned to San Francisco in mid-1966 and lived as a psychedelic musical commune for a period of time, releasing (between 1967 and 1969) several records, parts of which were consciously designed to be played while the listener is

in an altered state of consciousness. In 1967, following a raid by narcotics officers, the group abandoned its San Francisco commune and now live in separate houses in the country.

The group's basic sound can be described as hard rock, rhythm-and-blues which also includes electronic, classical, country-and-western, Indian, "accidental" music, jazz, and folk music. Members of the group often attribute their open attitude toward various musical forms to psychedelic experience which "does away with old forms" allowing them to create "music beyond idiom." (Lydon, 1969.) Bob Weir, the group's youngest member, has not taken LSD in large doses for four years. He does not regret his drug experiences but stated (in an interview with the author), "I think that I would have ended up at the same place even without acid."

The eclectic nature of the group and its music is also to be found among its performers. Micky Hart, for example, an Air Force veteran and jazz drummer, recalled that he was "stoned out of my mind" when he first heard the group in 1967 (Tawney, 1969). He jammed twice with the other drummer and asked Jerry Garcia if he could sit in with the group during an appearance at San Francisco's Straight Theatre. Hart says, "We finished and the crowd went wild, Jerry came over and embraced me, and I embraced him, and it's been like that ever since." Hart learned to play in Oriental meters. He now refers to the basic rock four-four beat as a "box" and has devised highly complicated patterns which he and Bill Kreutzman, the other drummer, synchronize—sometimes by hypnotically-induced altered states of consciousness.

The group has developed a style often described as "black satanic," personifying a "Horror comic monster who, besides being green and slimy, happens also to have seven different heads, a 190 IQ, countless decibels of liquid fire noise, communication, and is coming right down to where you are to gobble you up." (Lydon, 1969.) This image stems, in large part, from the group's association, from its earliest days, with LSD, marijuana, and psychedelic experience.

Subjects

Two "psychic sensitives," Malcolm Bessent and Felicia Parise, served as subjects for this study. Both had participated in previous

studies of extra-sensory effects at the Dream Laboratory (e.g., Kripner, 1970).

Mr. Bessent's dreams were monitored by standard psychophysiological techniques at the laboratory. Miss Parise slept at her apartment; she was telephoned from time to time during the night and asked for dream recall. Further, the audience at the Capitol Theater was told about Mr. Bessent's participation in the experiment, but was not informed as to Miss Parise. The difference in treatment between the two subjects was arranged so as to explore the influence of intentionality by the agents. If it is important in telepathy experiments that the agents know who they are transmitting messages to, one would have expected Mr. Bessent to do better than Miss Parise. However, if telepathy basically involves a "reaching out" for the target picture on the part of the subject, with little or no effort needed on the part of the agent, one would have expected Miss Parise to do as well as Mr. Bessent.

Procedure

Mr. Bessent arrived at the Dream Laboratory at approximately 10:00 P.M. each evening so as to be asleep at 11:30 P.M. when the audience was exposed to the target material. Miss Parise retired at about the same time.

Each of the six concerts was attended by about 2,000 persons. Further, it was apparent to observers at the concert that the majority of the people in the audience were in states of consciousness that had been dramatically altered by the time the slide was presented. These altered states of consciousness were brought about by the music, by the ingestion of psychedelic drugs before the concerts started, and by contact with other members of the audience. At 11:30 P.M., the following six-slide sequence was projected on a large screen:

1. YOU ARE ABOUT TO PARTICIPATE IN AN ESP EXPERIMENT.
2. IN A FEW SECONDS YOU WILL SEE A PICTURE.
3. TRY USING YOUR ESP TO "SEND" THIS PICTURE TO MALCOLM BESSENT.

4. HE WILL TRY TO DREAM ABOUT THE PICTURE. TRY TO "SEND" IT TO HIM.
5. MALCOLM BESSENT IS NOW AT THE MAIMONIDES DREAM LABORATORY IN BROOKLYN.

6. At this point, a randomly selected art print was projected on the screen.

The Grateful Dead continued to play while the slides were projected. Between numbers, they occasionally made comments regarding the experiment and the slides, thus drawing the audience's attention specifically to the material. The art print was projected for 15 minutes. As there was no "light show" on any of the six nights, the experimental material served as the only projected visual stimulus during the concert.

Mr. Bessent's sleep was monitored by standard electroencephalogram-electro-oculogram techniques. Following about 10 minutes of REM activity, Mr. Bessent was awakened, asked for his dream report, and told to go back to sleep. In the morning, Mr. Bessent was asked to give associations to each dream. Mr. Bessent's dream reports were recorded on tape, sent to a typist, and subsequently transcribed.

Miss Parise was telephoned at approximately 90-minute intervals during the night. Her dream reports were written down by an experimenter. The following morning, Miss Parise went over the dream reports, adding any pertinent details which had been omitted previously. She also gave associations to each of her dreams.

Evaluation

Evaluation was accomplished by giving two judges (M.B. and D.P.) all six transcripts for each subject as well as all six art prints actually used. The judges worked independently and had no contacts with each other, with the subjects, or with the staff members who had been at the laboratory on the nights of the experiments.

Each judge read the subject's transcripts and looked at the art prints. On a 100-point scale, he made a mark describing the degree of correspondence between the dreams and the art prints. When he

finished, he had made a total of 36 evaluations for Mr. Bessent and another 36 for Miss Parise.

The average evaluation of the two judges was computed for each pair of dream transcripts and target pictures. If coincidence, rather than ESP, had been operating, the judges' evaluation of the correct transcript-target pairs would have been higher than all other pairs one time out of six.

For Miss Parise, one correct pair obtained the highest rating. In the case of Mr. Bessent, the judges gave the highest scores to the correct pairs four times out of six. This distribution produces a critical ratio of 2.449 which is statistically significant at the .0124 level in a two-tailed test. Thus, for Mr. Bessent, the ESP hypothesis is supported. Further, some support is given to the position that the agents must know who the target is to be transmitted to and where he is located for telepathy to occur.

Examples

On the night of February 19, 1971, "The Seven Spinal Chakras" was randomly selected as the target picture. This painting shows a man in the lotus position practicing yogic meditation. All seven "chakras" (energy centers of the body, centering around the spinal column) are vividly colored. Excerpts from Mr. Bessent's dreams follow:

I was very interested in . . . using natural energy I was talking to this guy who said he'd invented a way of using solar energy and he showed me this box . . . to catch the light from the sun which was all we needed to generate and store the energy . . . I was discussing with this other guy a number of other areas of communication and we were exchanging ideas on the whole thing He was suspended in mid-air or something I was thinking about rocket ships I'm remembering a dream I had . . . about an energy box and . . . a spinal column.

On several other nights, Mr. Bessent's dream reports demonstrated a degree of correspondence with the target pictures. For example, on February 20, 1971, Magritte's surrealist painting, "Philosophy in the Boudoir," was randomly selected; it portrays a headless woman dressed in a transparent gown. Mr. Bessent

dreamed about "a little girl's doll" and a "fantasy" about a "stop-watch on a card around my neck."

Conclusion

Mr. Bessent's results were statistically significant and Miss Parise's were not; several possibilities for this difference should be considered. Of importance is the fact that on each of six nights the 2,000 members of the concert audience were exposed to Mr. Bessent's name and were instructed to "send" the image of the target picture to the Maimonides Dream Laboratory in Brooklyn. Miss Parise's name was not exposed to the audience and she was not located at the Dream Laboratory. Thus, it is likely that the results of this experiment demonstrate the necessity of agent orientation; in other words, the telepathic "sender" must know the purpose of the experiment in order to make a contribution to the paranormal effect.

Two alternative, or at least contributory, explanations must also be considered. It may have been that during the time of the experiment, Mr. Bessent's telepathic abilities were more sensitive than those of Miss Parise. If so, Mr. Bessent would have done better regardless of the other procedures. In addition, it must be remembered that Mr. Bessent was awakened after REM activity in a laboratory. Miss Parise was awakened by telephone and some of her dreams may not have been remembered. (Despite this situation, Miss Parise reported more dreams than Mr. Bessent.)

In any event, the fact remains that one of the two subjects in this experiment produced results which were statistically significant and which demonstrated his ability to receive impressions of a randomly selected target picture 45 miles distant. The experimental situation was tightly controlled; thus, extrasensory perception is the most likely explanation of the results. As the target picture was 45 miles from the subjects, the possibility of sensory cues can be eliminated. As 2,000 people saw the randomly selected target each night, the possibility of fraud (due to the substitution of a target picture) seems unlikely. This experiment does not prove that 2,000 agents are better than a single agent; future work is needed to explore this intriguing possibility.